

4  
the  
wealth  
hoarders

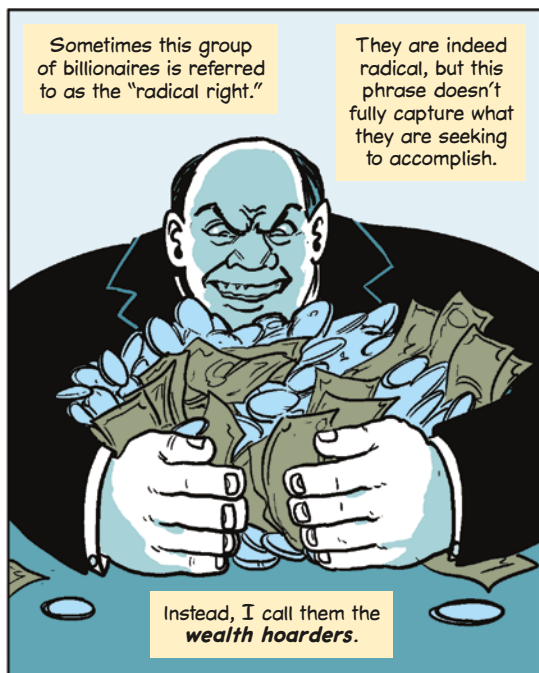
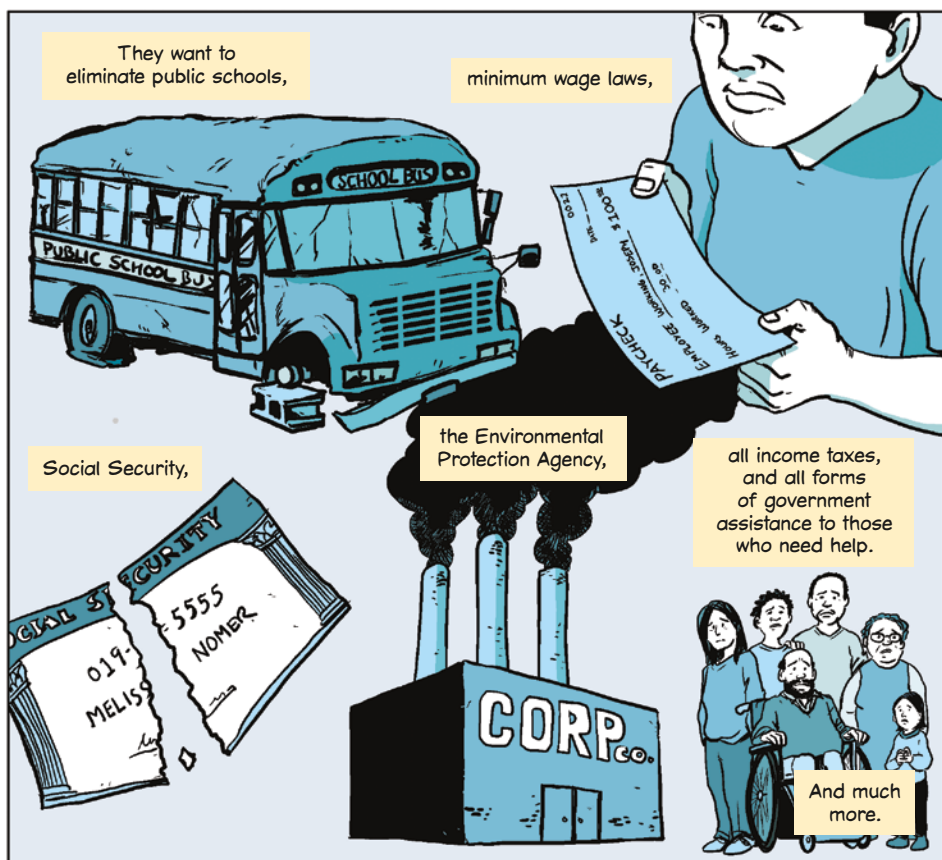


As we work to unrig the rules so that our country works for everyone, it helps to know who's working to *rig* those rules so that our country serves only the very wealthy.

A small group of extremist billionaires has been working for more than a half century to change our country to their liking—in a way that will hollow out our democracy.

They want to turn the United States into a fiefdom where the very wealthy make the laws and control the government.







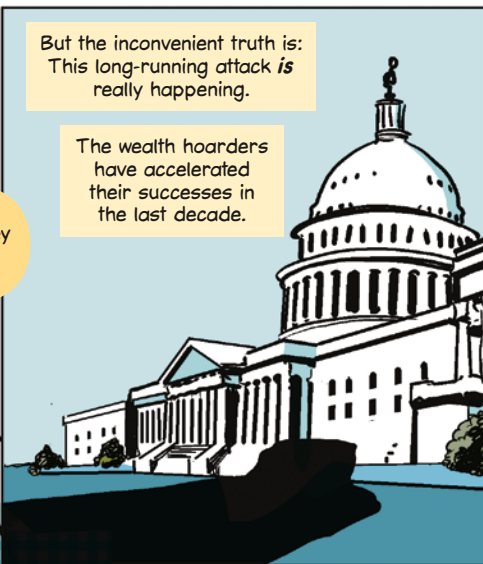
I wish I were making this up, but I'm not.

The wealth hoarders' plans, strategies, and goals are so multifaceted, far-reaching, and radical that it's hard to get one's head around them.

It's easier to believe that they aren't really happening.

But the inconvenient truth is: This long-running attack *is* really happening.

The wealth hoarders have accelerated their successes in the last decade.



We are seeing the effects everywhere. Their assault is not going away.

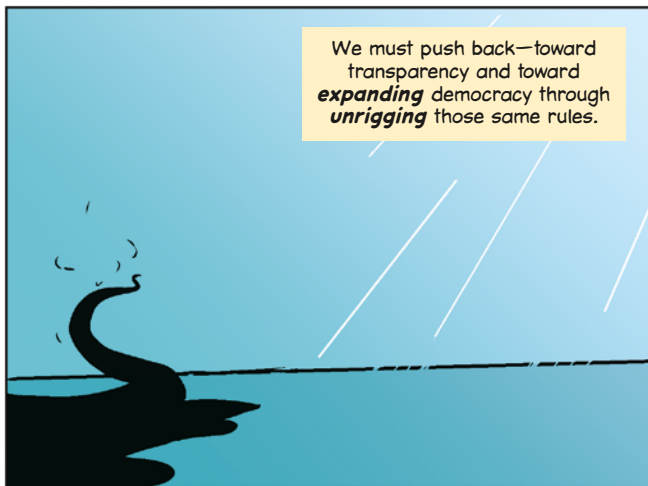
But we can stop the wealth hoarders' plans.

Their gains depend on secrecy, deception, and **limiting** democracy by rigging the rules.



We must push back—toward transparency and toward **expanding** democracy through **unrigging** those same rules.

At stake: everything we care about.



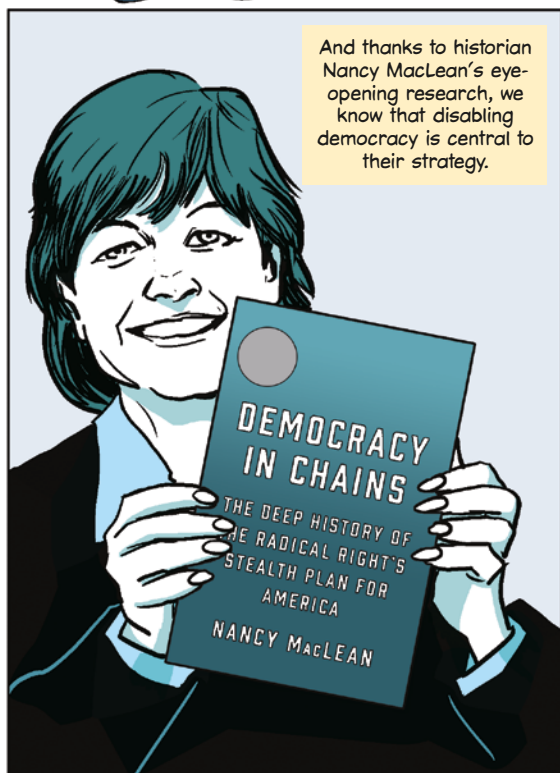
To stop the wealth hoarder agenda, it helps to better understand the people behind it.



From the groundbreaking work of journalist Jane Mayer, we have a good idea of who these people are and what they seek.



And thanks to historian Nancy MacLean's eye-opening research, we know that disabling democracy is central to their strategy.



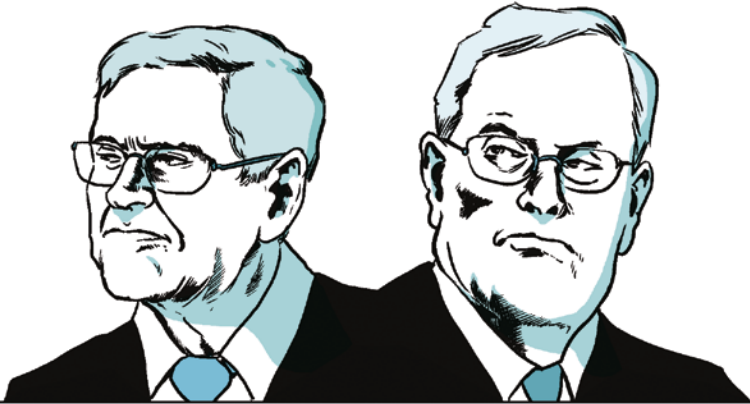
This chapter is based on their work. It's a long chapter, due to its importance.



# *wealth hoarder leaders*

Let's start with Charles and David Koch. Charles is, and David was, until his 2019 death, among the wealthiest people in the world.

Charles and David were born into wealth inherited from their father, Fred.

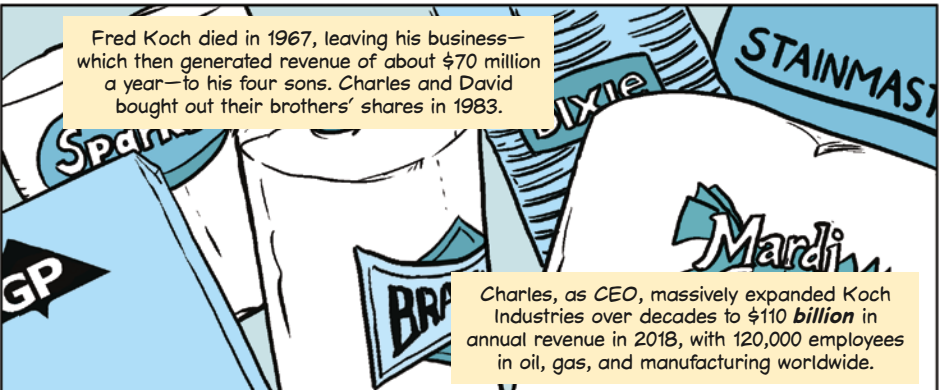


Fred Koch's oil-refining business, founded in the United States, grew substantially by helping Adolf Hitler in Germany.

Fred Koch oversaw the construction of a massive oil refinery in Hamburg—a key component of the Nazi war machine, as one of the few plants that could produce the fuel needed for German fighter planes.



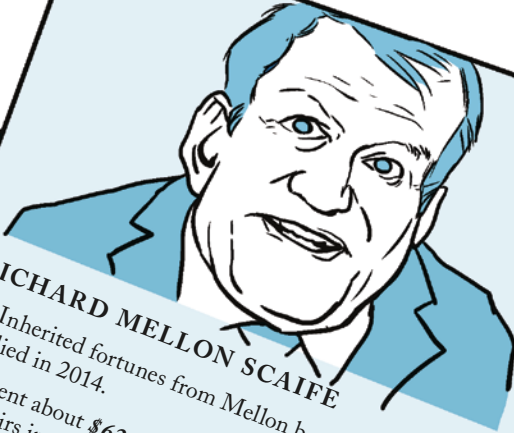
Fred Koch died in 1967, leaving his business—which then generated revenue of about \$70 million a year—to his four sons. Charles and David bought out their brothers' shares in 1983.



Charles, as CEO, massively expanded Koch Industries over decades to \$110 **billion** in annual revenue in 2018, with 120,000 employees in oil, gas, and manufacturing worldwide.

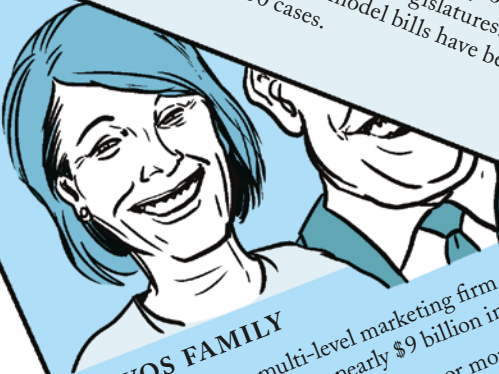
In 2019, Charles Koch had a net worth of \$50 billion.

There are hundreds of extremely wealthy families allied with the Kochs, like these:



### RICHARD MELLON SCAIFE

- Inherited fortunes from Mellon banking and Gulf Oil; died in 2014.
- Spent about **\$620 million** to influence American public affairs in an extreme conservative direction.
- Provided major funding to the Heritage Foundation, an aggressively political think tank promoting extreme conservative ideas.
- Provided major funding to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which promotes conservative and corporate causes in state legislatures. From 2010 through 2018, ALEC-model bills have become state law in more than 600 cases.

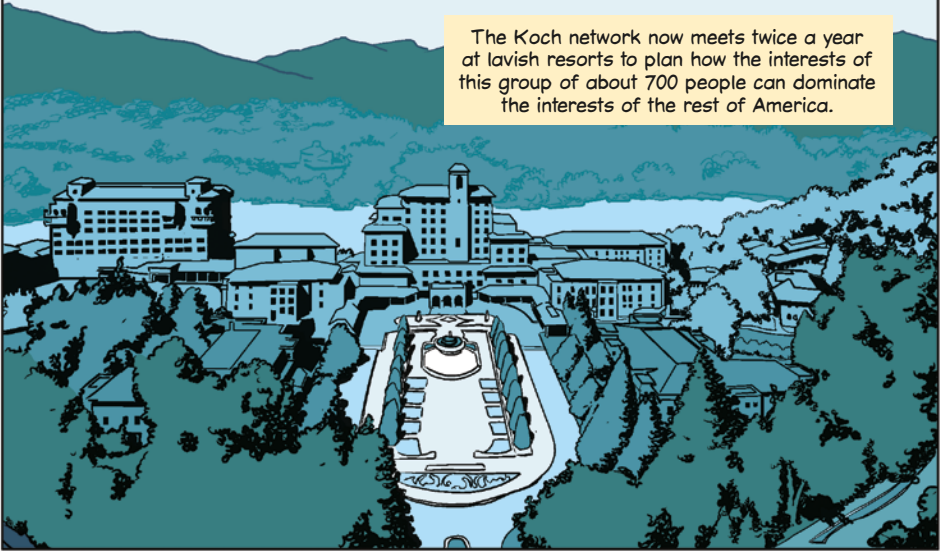


### DEVOS FAMILY

- Founded the multi-level marketing firm Amway in 1959, which grew to nearly \$9 billion in 2018 revenues.
- Has contributed \$200 million or more to many conservative causes since 1970.
- Has long supported reducing public school funding and increasing the amount of public funds that go to private schools.
- Betsy DeVos was confirmed as Secretary of Education in 2017, following her family's gifts of \$957,950 to twenty-one Republican senators.

In 2003, Charles Koch had the idea of organizing like-minded millionaires and billionaires into a formal network to centrally fund and coordinate the wealth hoarders' efforts.

The Koch network now meets twice a year at lavish resorts to plan how the interests of this group of about 700 people can dominate the interests of the rest of America.



The network keeps its membership secret.



It keeps its funding of wealth hoarder groups secret, too, so members can avoid public accountability.



Their anti-government groups and ideas, and political attack ads, would lose credibility if the public could see clearly that these groups were doing the bidding of a network of billionaires.

But what, exactly, are these billionaires trying to accomplish?





## *wealth hoarder ideology*

Rich people  
don't need  
government.



Instead of  
public schools,  
they can afford  
private schools.



Instead of public  
parks, they have  
their own estates.



They can pay for  
private security  
patrols and private  
health care.



And they don't rely  
on Social Security—  
they have all the  
retirement money  
they need.

Most rich people, though, like the rest of us, understand that taxes are part of the price of living in a civilized society.

Taxes allow the government to accomplish what is needed for Americans as a whole.



Taxes pay for public education, so that all children have a better chance to achieve their potential.



They pay for Social Security, which dramatically reduces poverty.



They pay for regulations on commerce, which help prevent companies from exploiting workers and creating monopolies.



Other regulations block factories from poisoning the air and Wall Street banks from wrecking the economy.



We all pay something so that we have a collective benefit—a society that works better than it would if everyone fended for themselves.

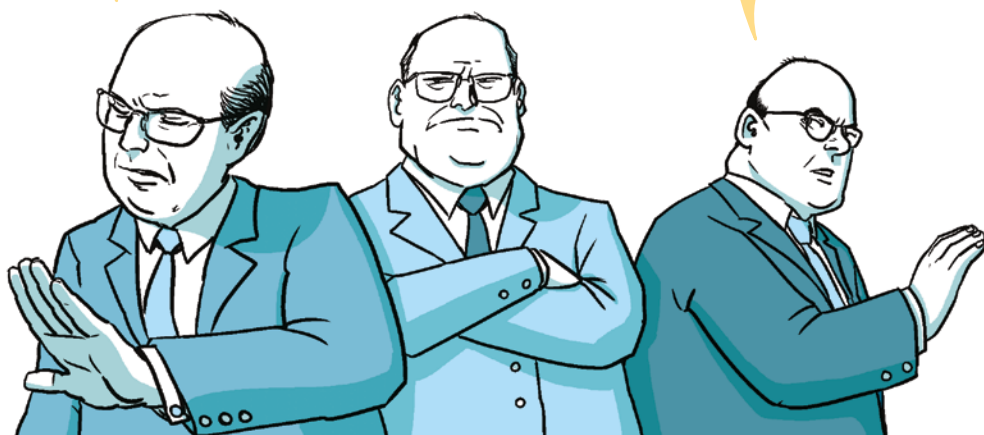
The wealth hoarders think differently.



Everyone  
is out for  
themselves.

I've already  
got mine.

Why should  
I pay taxes to  
help anyone  
else?

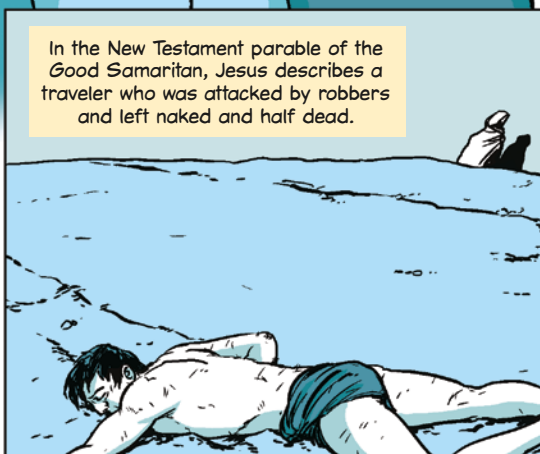


Academics  
and writers, many funded  
by wealth hoarder patrons,  
have published volumes of  
justification for this greed-  
based philosophy—

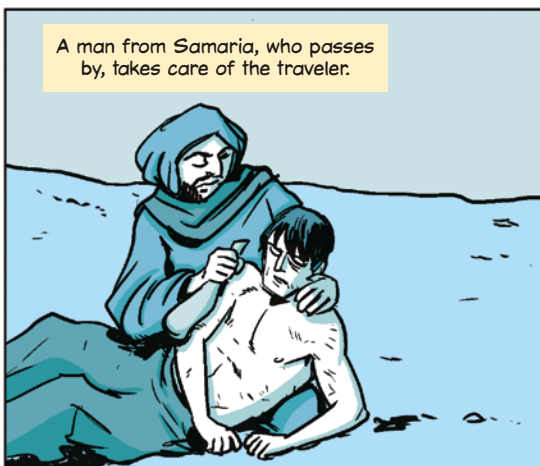


—like the 1975 article  
“The Samaritan’s Dilemma”  
by James McGill Buchanan,  
an influential libertarian  
economist.

In the New Testament parable of the  
Good Samaritan, Jesus describes a  
traveler who was attacked by robbers  
and left naked and half dead.



A man from Samaria, who passes  
by, takes care of the traveler.







# *the wealth hoarder agenda*



Their published presidential platform, if implemented, would wipe out government as we know it.

# 1980

## Libertarian Party Policy Platform



### TO BE ABOLISHED:

- Public schools and required education of children
- Minimum wage and child labor laws
- Social Security
- Medicare and Medicaid
- All campaign finance laws
- The EPA, SEC, and FDA\*
- The FBI and CIA
- All income, corporate, and capital gains taxes
- Prosecution of tax evaders
- All forms of welfare for low-income people

\*Environmental Protection Agency, Securities and Exchange Commission, Food and Drug Administration

The result on Election Day?  
Just 1% of the vote.

In 1980, most Americans  
despised the wealth hoarders'  
aims, as they still do today.



Still, Charles and David Koch kept  
at it, seeking ways to make their  
deeply unpopular vision a reality.

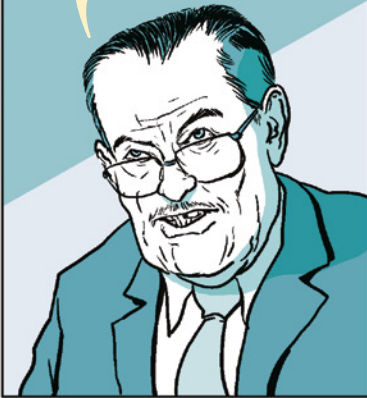


They found answers in the work of  
Buchanan, who sought similar ends.

Buchanan saw that in a modern, inclusive democracy, the wealth hoarders' unpopular ideas would always lose.

So Buchanan developed and promoted strategies to cripple and bind democracy—to stop it from reflecting the interests of the majority of the people.

We must remove the sacrosanct status assigned to majority rule.



Buchanan saw that individual politicians come and go, but the rules of elections and government are what determine, over time, which interests win.

The problems of our times require attention to the **rules** rather than the **rulers**.





Buchanan dreamed of a government barred by constitutional law from offering social programs or regulating businesses and wealth, even when most people want these things.

A government unresponsive to the majority, instead privileging the interests of the wealthy few.



The Kochs put these strategies into action.



In a phenomenon never before seen in history, a small group of billionaires has organized and funded a comprehensive, long-term assault on American democracy that continues today.



# *the kochtopus*

By the late 1980s, the Kochs sought a more practical approach to politics than supporting the Libertarian candidate for president.

They and their allies used their vast wealth to stealthily push radical anti-government ideology into the mainstream.

They invested in intellectuals to generate ideas aligned with the wealth hoarder agenda.

They invested in think tanks and "thought leaders" to get these ideas into the public's consciousness.

They influenced college and university curricula.

They remade the American judiciary.

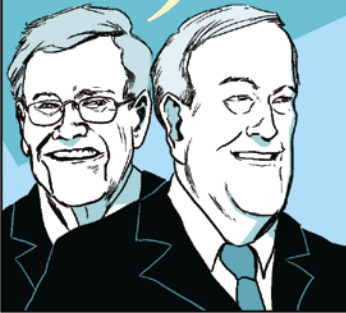
They supported groups to pressure elected officials.

They took over the Republican Party.

They targeted the government's most successful programs.

And much more, as I'll show you.

From idea creation to policy development to education to grassroots organizations to lobbying to political action.



When possible, the Kochs used nonprofit foundations to bankroll these efforts, so that funding for their plans was tax-deductible.

**Heritage Foundation**  
**FreedomWorks** **Tax Founda**  
**Competitive Enterprise Insti**  
**deralist Society**  
**Americans for Pro**  
**p for Growth**  
**Citizens for a Sound Economy**  
**State Policy Net**  
**Cato Inst**

Why pay taxes when you could fund right-wing think tanks instead?

In supporting so many different initiatives, the Kochs took a long-term view.

They knew some of their investments would take years to pay off.



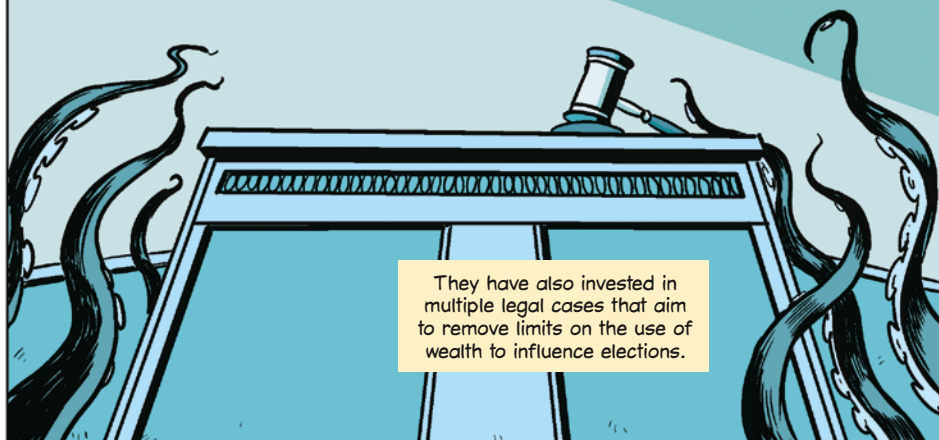
They also knew that some initiatives would be more successful than others, and they were prepared to accept failures as a cost of finding approaches that worked.



The result of all these efforts?  
The systematic shackling of American democracy, starting with the judiciary.

## *remaking courts and the law*

The wealth hoarders have invested heavily over decades to train and promote the appointments of like-minded judges and to influence judges already on the bench.



They have also invested in multiple legal cases that aim to remove limits on the use of wealth to influence elections.

## INFLUENCING JUDGES

The Olin Foundation, funded by the ammunition and chemical baron John Olin, had views allied with the Kochs.



It led a successful multi-decade campaign to move judges, and all of legal education, to the right.

A type of analysis that applies economic concepts to law was considered a fringe libertarian theory—until the Olin Foundation spent an astonishing \$68 million to support it in American law schools from 1985 to 1989.

### Law and Economics

Harvard \$10 million

Yale \$7 million

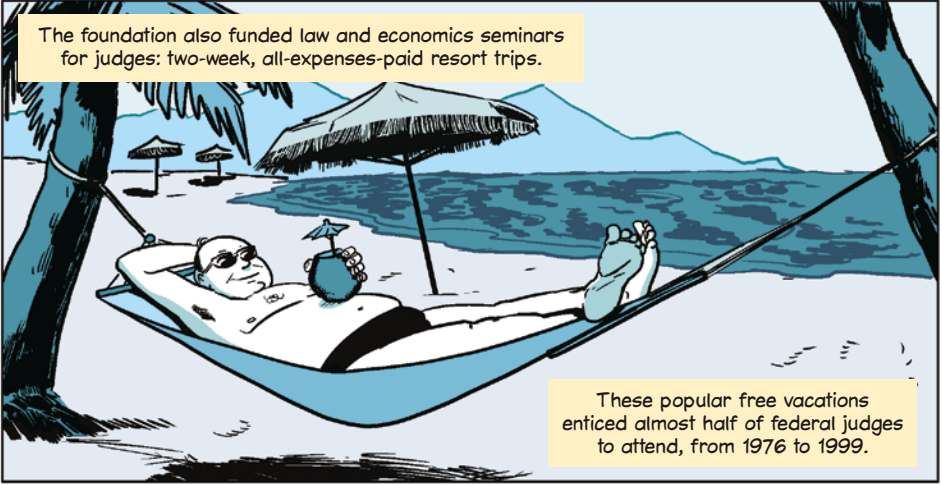
Chicago \$7 million

Columbia \$2 million

The foundation even paid students to take law and economics classes.

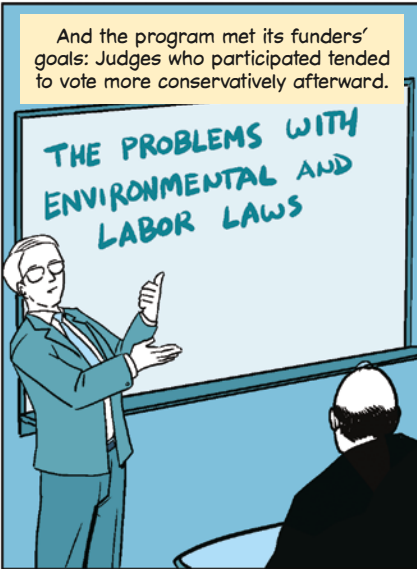


The foundation also funded law and economics seminars for judges: two-week, all-expenses-paid resort trips.

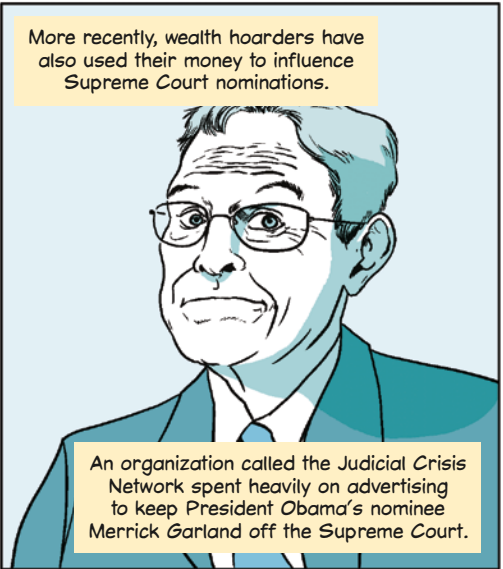


These popular free vacations enticed almost half of federal judges to attend, from 1976 to 1999.

And the program met its funders' goals: Judges who participated tended to vote more conservatively afterward.

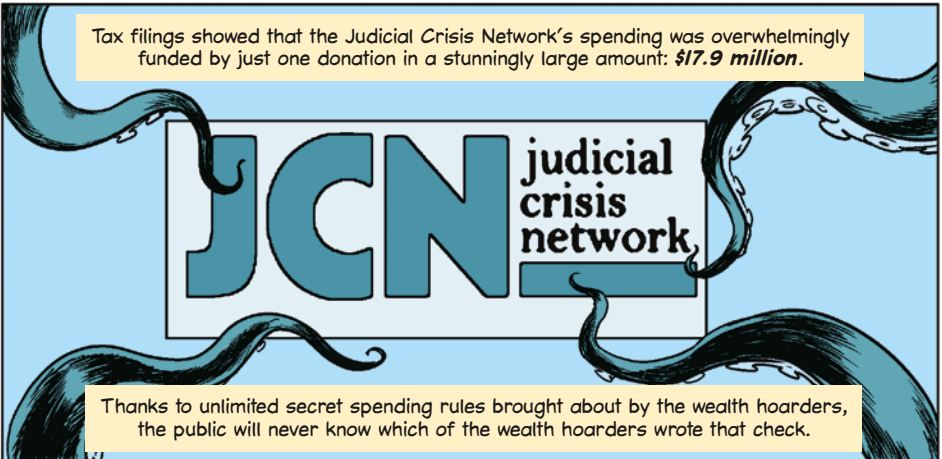


More recently, wealth hoarders have also used their money to influence Supreme Court nominations.



An organization called the Judicial Crisis Network spent heavily on advertising to keep President Obama's nominee Merrick Garland off the Supreme Court.


Tax filings showed that the Judicial Crisis Network's spending was overwhelmingly funded by just one donation in a stunningly large amount: **\$17.9 million**.



Thanks to unlimited secret spending rules brought about by the wealth hoarders, the public will never know which of the wealth hoarders wrote that check.

By the way, that check is not stunningly large to the wealth hoarders.

Suppose you have a net worth of \$100,000, the median net worth of American households.




\$17.9 million to someone with the wealth of Charles Koch is like \$36 to you.

Charles Koch

pay to the order of \$ 17.9 million

SEVENTEEN.9 MILLION + <sup>00</sup>/<sub>100</sub> DOLLARS



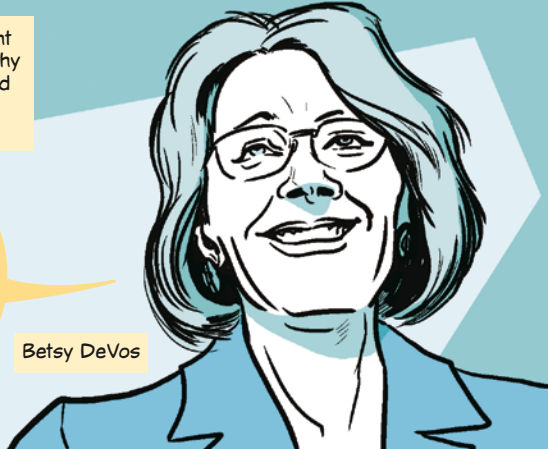
That's how little it costs them to overrun our politics with money, and why breaking the grip of money on our politics is the only way forward.

## UNLIMITED DARK MONEY

For years the wealth hoarders sought to end restrictions on how much wealthy people can spend to get their favored candidates elected, with the DeVos family showing particular intensity.

I have decided... to stop taking offense at the suggestion that we are buying influence. Now I simply concede the point. They are right.

Betsy DeVos



In 1997, Betsy DeVos became a founding board member of a group called the James Madison Center for Free Speech.



*James Madison*

JAMES MADISON CENTER FOR FREE SPEECH

Other early donors included the Christian Coalition and the National Rifle Association, both allies of the Koch network.

The Center's goal: eliminating all laws restricting money in politics.



It brought case after case challenging these laws.

The wealth hoarders' investments in influencing the courts paid off spectacularly with two court decisions in 2010, *Citizens United v. FEC* and *SpeechNOW.org v. FEC*.

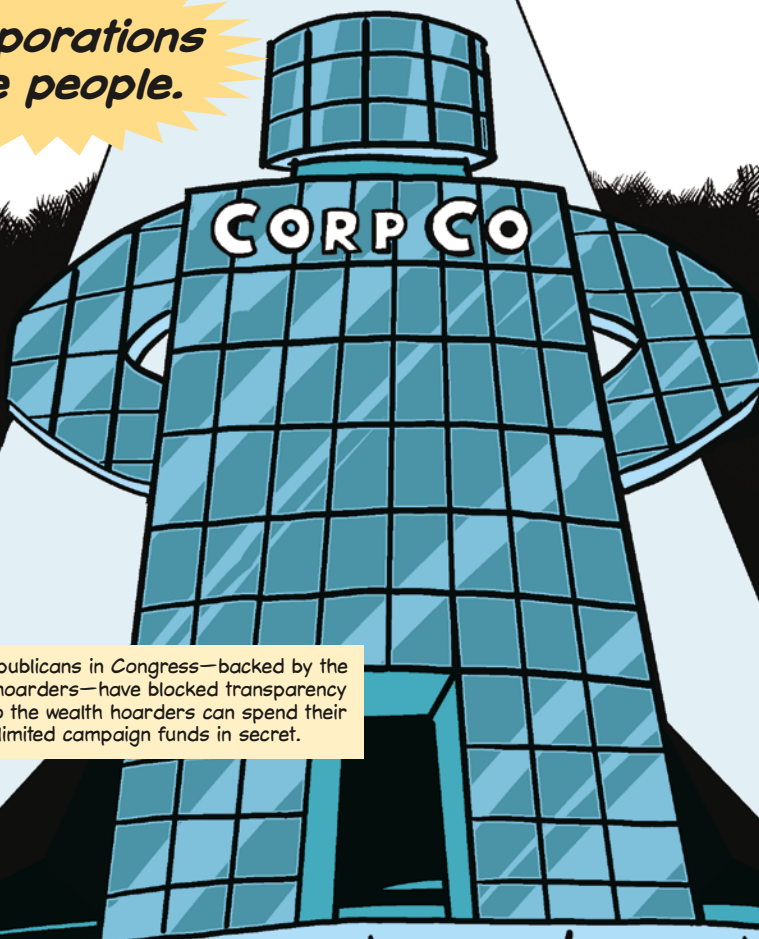


**SPEECH  
NOW.ORG**



They provided the wealth hoarders with what they had long sought: the ability to spend an unlimited amount to influence elections.

***Corporations  
are people.***

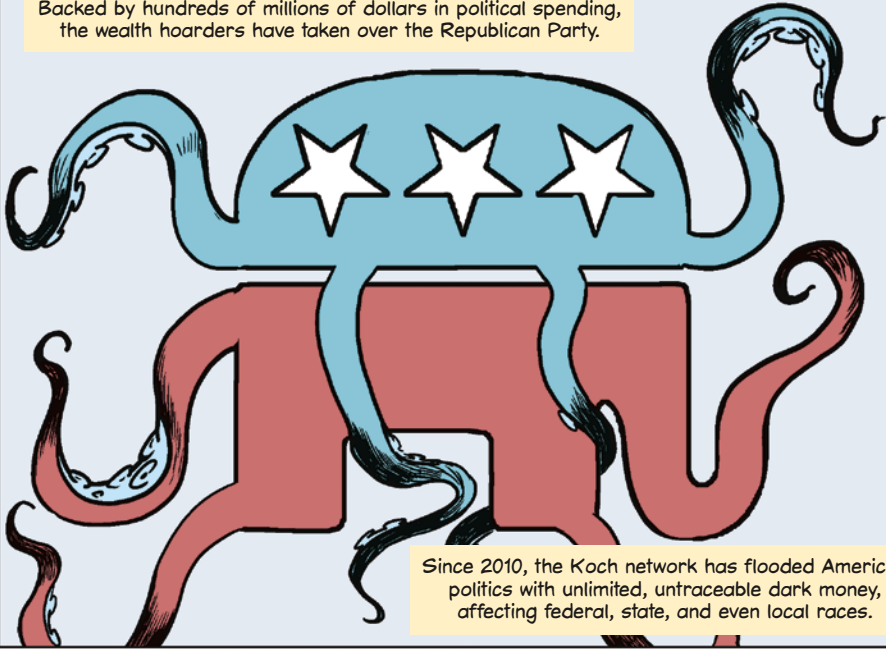


And Republicans in Congress—backed by the wealth hoarders—have blocked transparency laws, so the wealth hoarders can spend their unlimited campaign funds in secret.

What has their money bought?

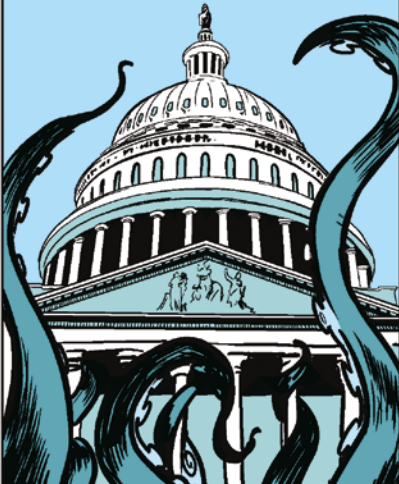
## *takeover of the republican party*

Backed by hundreds of millions of dollars in political spending, the wealth hoarders have taken over the Republican Party.



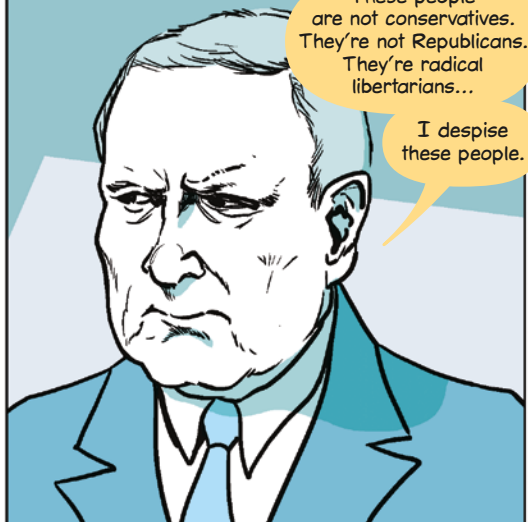
Since 2010, the Koch network has flooded American politics with unlimited, untraceable dark money, affecting federal, state, and even local races.

It has helped win hundreds of Republican seats in state legislatures and Congress.



The network has also aggressively opposed Republicans in primaries who do not toe the wealth hoarder line.

For example, Orrin Hatch, a conservative U.S. senator from Utah, was targeted in the 2012 Republican primary by a candidate backing the wealth hoarder anti-government agenda.



These people are not conservatives. They're not Republicans. They're radical libertarians...

I despise these people.



Hatch, who was reelected, wanted to avoid primary challenges like this in the future, so he learned to comply with the wealth hoarder agenda

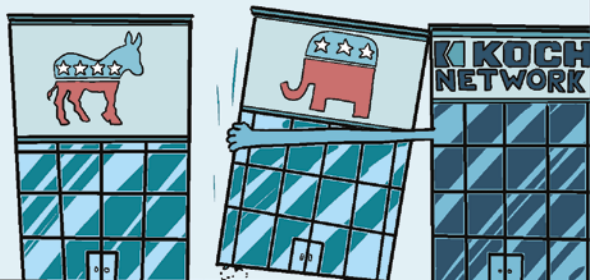


For example, in 2017, Hatch backed massive tax cuts for the wealthy, while saying "we don't have any money" for a children's health insurance program that he had co-created twenty years earlier.

The overall result: Newly elected Republicans who follow the wealth hoarder agenda because that's what they were sponsored to do, and incumbent Republicans who follow the wealth hoarder agenda because they're afraid of getting "primaried."



In addition to sponsoring candidates, the Koch network has built its own massive political organization rivaling the Republican Party in size.



It has its own national voter database, with detailed personality profiles on 89% of the U.S. population.

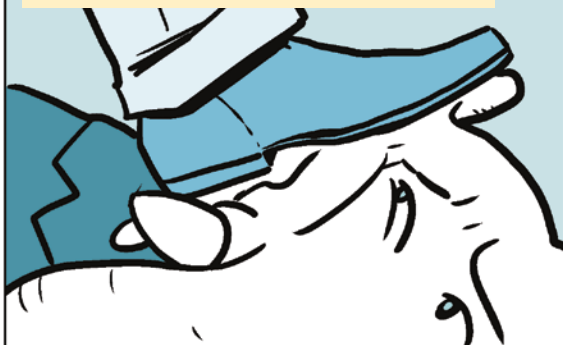


It has pollsters, ad makers, and a large grassroots organizing wing.



It employs thousands of people who are fighting for the wealth hoarder agenda.

These pressure tactics from every direction let the wealth hoarders keep their feet to the necks of Republican lawmakers to force compliance, and to influence Democratic lawmakers, too.



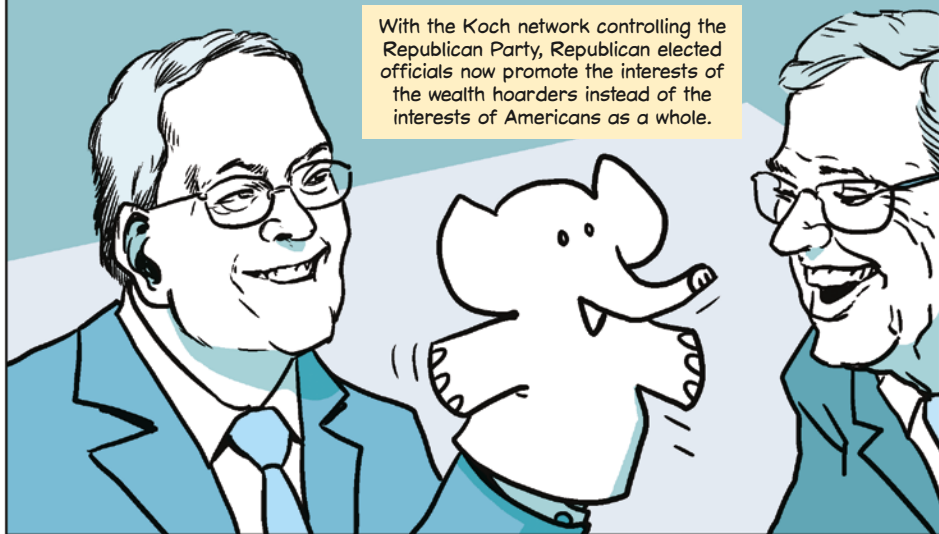
And this massive system changing our government is accountable to no one—



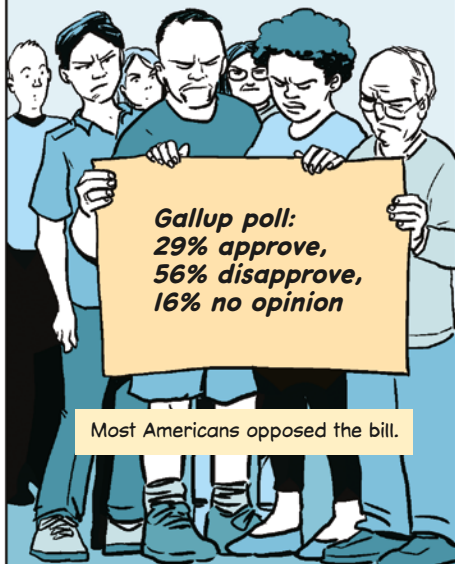
—except a small group of the wealthiest people in America.

## *tax breaks for the rich*

With the Koch network controlling the Republican Party, Republican elected officials now promote the interests of the wealth hoarders instead of the interests of Americans as a whole.



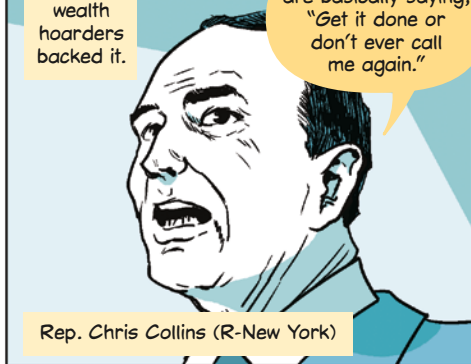
For example, in 2017, Republicans passed a tax bill that slashed taxes on corporations and the very wealthy—creating enormous government deficits and adding to the national debt.



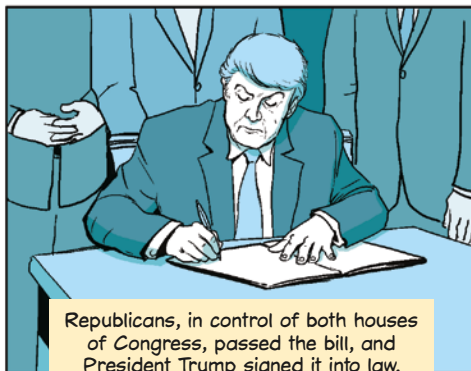
But the wealth hoarders backed it.

My donors are basically saying, "Get it done or don't ever call me again."

Rep. Chris Collins (R-New York)



Republicans, in control of both houses of Congress, passed the bill, and President Trump signed it into law.



## INCREASING DEBT

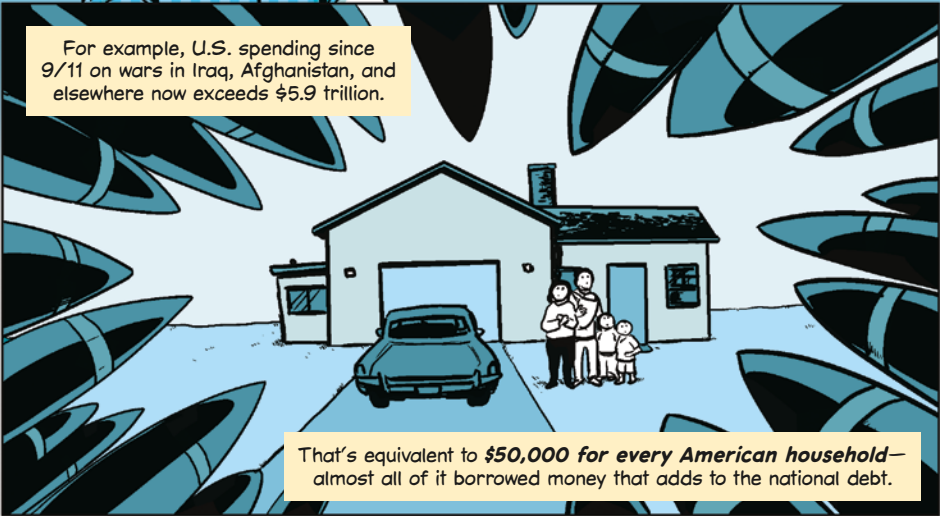
Most people would call it fiscally irresponsible to pass tax cuts while running up debt.

And it's not just cutting taxes.

The wealth hoarders also add to the deficit by supporting enormous government spending on defense without a way to pay for it.



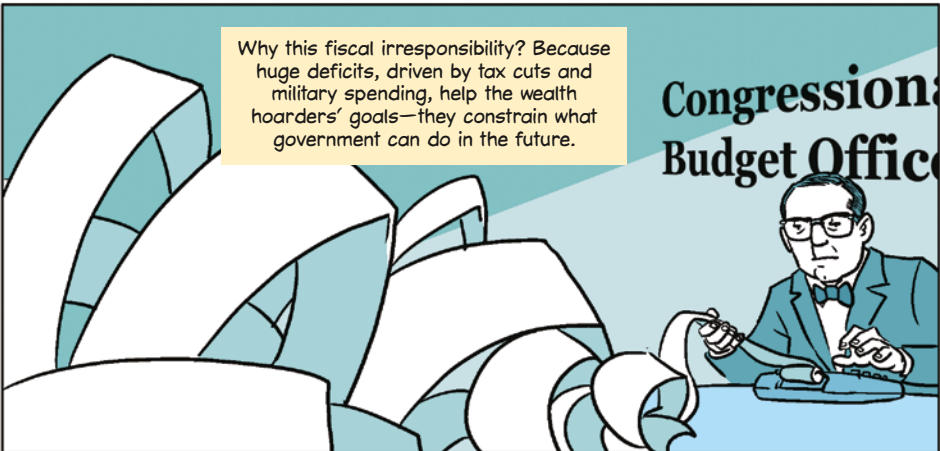
For example, U.S. spending since 9/11 on wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere now exceeds \$5.9 trillion.



That's equivalent to **\$50,000 for every American household**—almost all of it borrowed money that adds to the national debt.

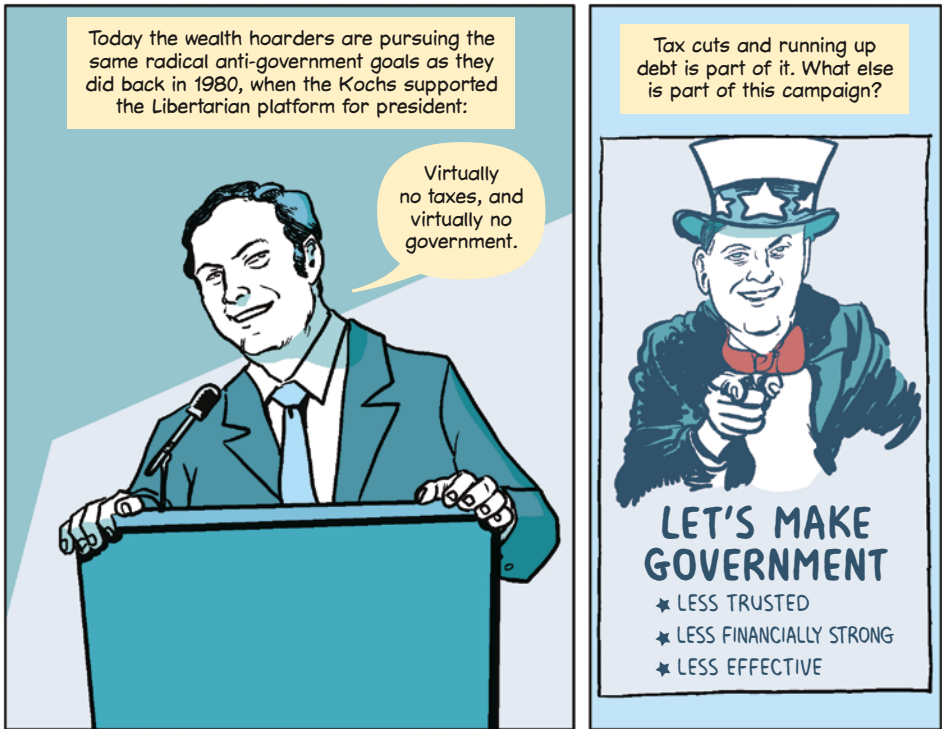
Why this fiscal irresponsibility? Because huge deficits, driven by tax cuts and military spending, help the wealth hoarders' goals—they constrain what government can do in the future.

**Congressional  
Budget Office**

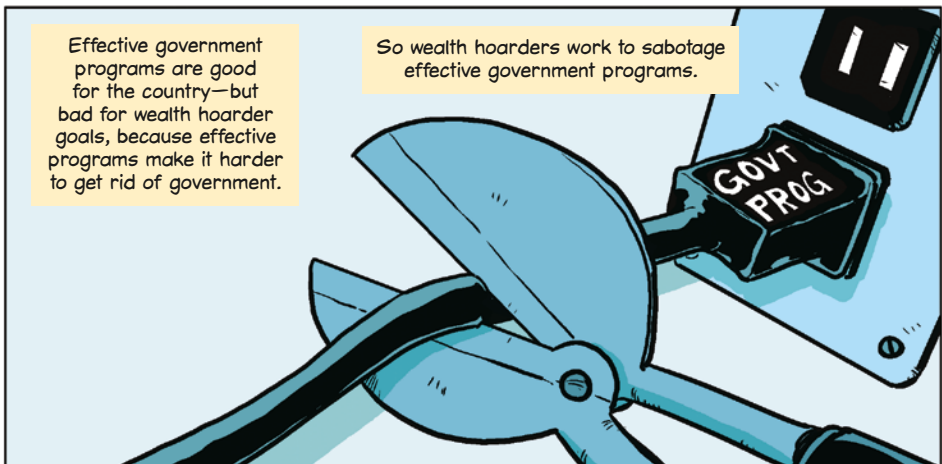




# *breaking government*



## SABOTAGING GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESSSES



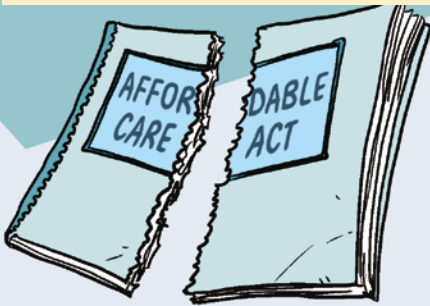
For example, the Koch network has aggressively opposed public transit in states and cities.

A functional public transit system gives people benefits from having a government.



Public transit also means less driving, and Koch Industries profits from gas consumption and road construction.

This anti-government focus also explains why Republicans have been intent on repealing the Affordable Care Act without a replacement—even though repeal would cause 30 million people to lose health coverage.



They don't want any government program that provides benefits to people.

Another example: Social Security.

Wealth hoarders have long targeted it, because it's a government program that's popular and effective.



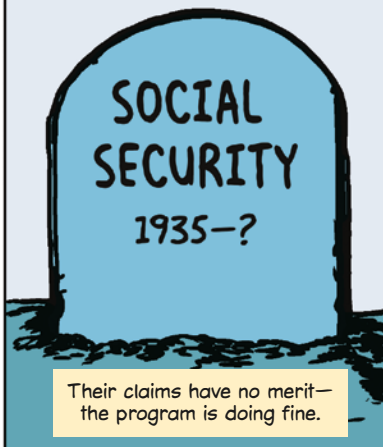
Their think tanks and political candidates promote changing Social Security to privatized retirement accounts.

But there is little support among Americans for substantially modifying the program.



People like Social Security and are terrified of facing old age without it.

Following a devious strategy developed by the economist Buchanan, wealth hoarders instead **cast doubt** on Social Security's health and whether it will be around in the future.



Their claims have no merit—the program is doing fine.

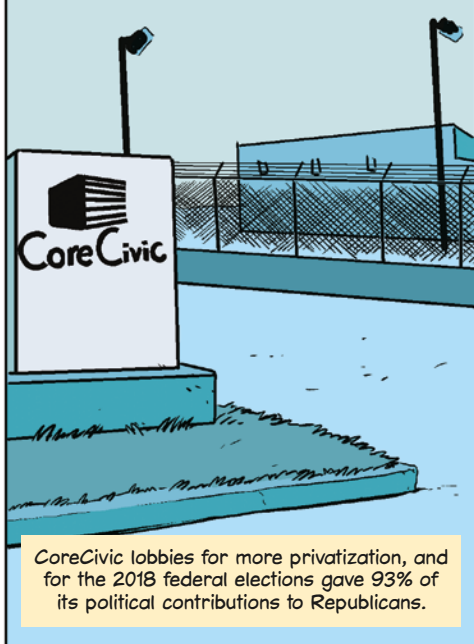
Yet wealth hoarder allies continue to repeat them, dividing the public against the program.



The wealth hoarders have also enlisted the help of Wall Street banks, which would receive a massive windfall from privatizing Social Security.

## PRIVATIZATION

Koch-backed groups also push for prisons to be owned by private corporations instead of the government, engaging private prison corporations like CoreCivic.



CoreCivic lobbies for more privatization, and for the 2018 federal elections gave 93% of its political contributions to Republicans.

The wealth hoarders' push for privatization is an incremental step toward the vision of private, corporate control of every function now run by government.



School voucher programs, which provide public tax funds to private schools instead of public schools, are part of the same privatization approach.

## FUNDING CLIMATE CHANGE DENIAL

Perhaps the wealth hoarders' most threatening anti-government activism is their opposition to laws protecting the environment.

In 1980, the Kochs aimed to abolish the Environmental Protection Agency, and their position has not changed.



Their ideology aligns neatly with their financial interests as owners of a major fossil fuel corporation.

The Kochs have been leaders in funding a decades-long campaign of climate change denial that weakens public consensus on the need to act on global warming, achieving their goal of government inaction.



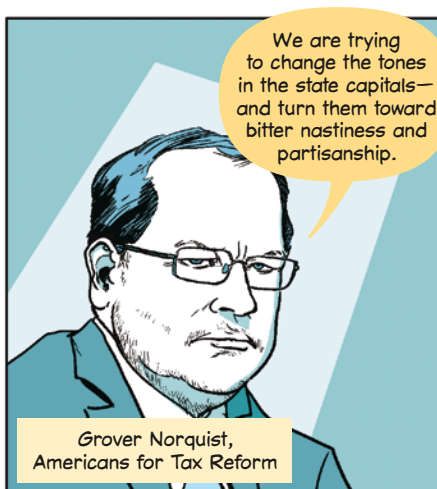
They and allied billionaires have "primaried" Republicans who seek to protect the planet, aligning the Republican Party with a handful of fossil fuel corporations and against science and the rest of the world.

## BITTER NASTINESS AND PARTISANSHIP

If you've been paying attention to politics since around 2010, you may have noticed that many Republicans in Congress have become less willing to compromise—both within their own party, and with Democrats.

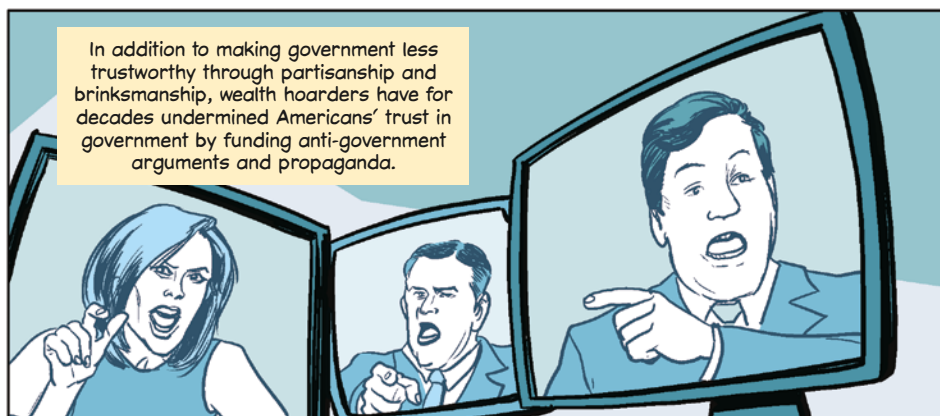
This reflects the influence of the wealth hoarders, for whom a dysfunctional government gets them closer to their goal of virtually no government.



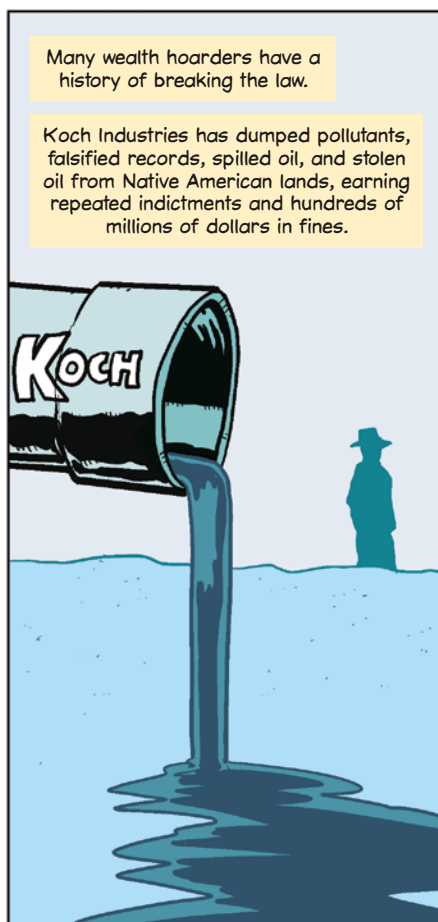




## DECREASING TRUST



## LAWBREAKERS



# *making what's radical mainstream*

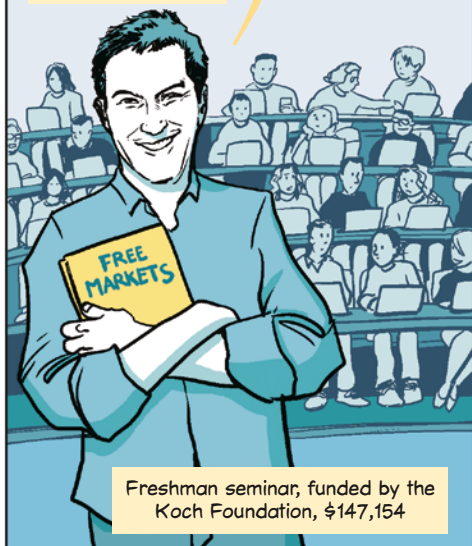
The wealth hoarders pursue many other strategies to make their radical anti-government proposals mainstream.

They influence colleges and universities, sponsoring anti-tax, anti-regulation faculty and courses at hundreds of schools.



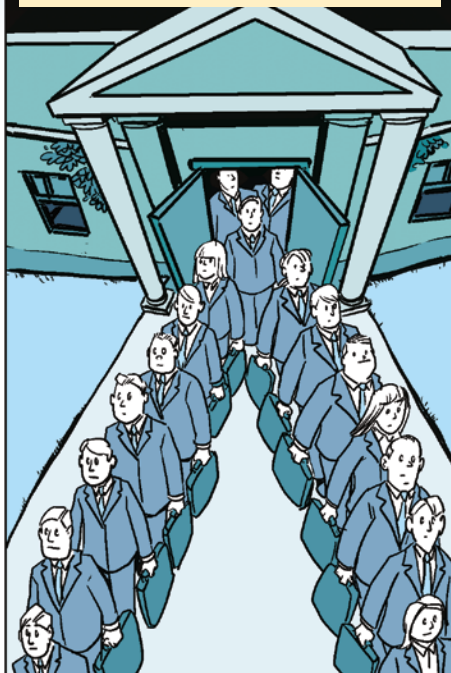
After a whole semester of Hayek\*, it's hard to shake them off that perspective over the next four years.

Prof. John Tomasi,  
Brown University



Freshman seminar, funded by the Koch Foundation, \$147,154

The schools graduate young professionals trained in wealth hoarder ideology—foot soldiers to staff the wealth hoarders' hundreds of organizations nationwide.



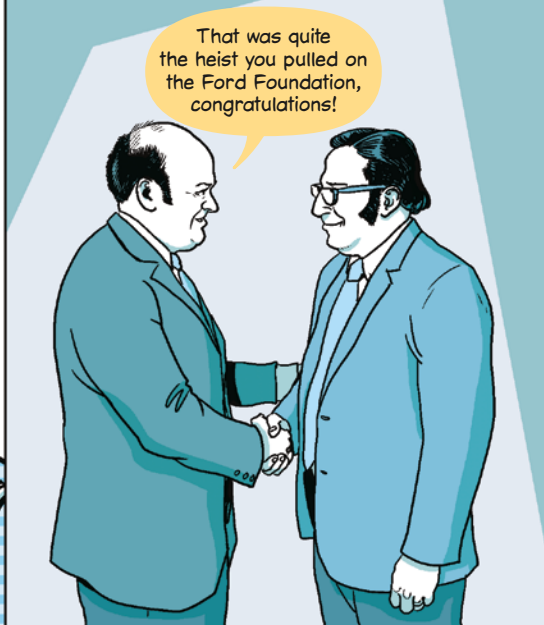
\*Libertarian economist

In another tactic, wealth hoarders pressure nonpartisan groups to be more conservative by accusing them of *bias* against conservatives.



The Ford Foundation began awarding a series of grants to a right-wing think tank, American Enterprise Institute, in 1972, after these accusations began.

That was quite the heist you pulled on the Ford Foundation, congratulations!



The same criticism of "bias" has pushed mainstream news outlets to add more conservative commentators.



# TALK TODAY



Now on Sunday news shows, for example, conservative guests far outnumber liberals.



## *disabling democracy*

The rigged rules of democracy that I discuss throughout this book?

They didn't just happen. They are part of the wealth hoarder strategy.



In a functioning democracy, with majority rule, the wealth hoarders cannot win, because what they seek to implement is unpopular.

So to prevail, the wealth hoarders must **disable** democracy. They have been doing so aggressively.

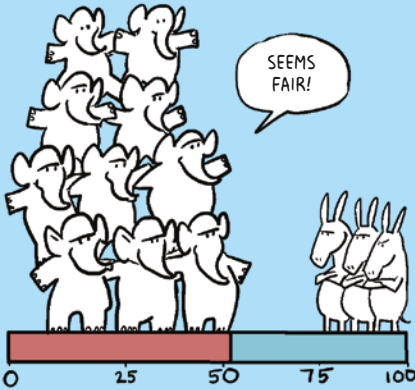
**DARK MONEY**

**POLITICAL MACHINE**

By influencing the judiciary and Republican lawmakers, the wealth hoarders killed limits and transparency for political spending, both central to democratic rule.

In Republican-controlled state legislatures, they've drawn the most extreme gerrymanders in modern history.

In North Carolina in 2016, for example, Republicans won 53% of votes in U.S. House elections—but won ten out of thirteen seats.



Republican legislatures have also passed a slew of voter-suppression laws since 2010, following the wealth hoarder strategy of distorting election results by making it harder for people to vote—especially people of color, low-income citizens, and young people.

I don't want everybody to vote... Our leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down.



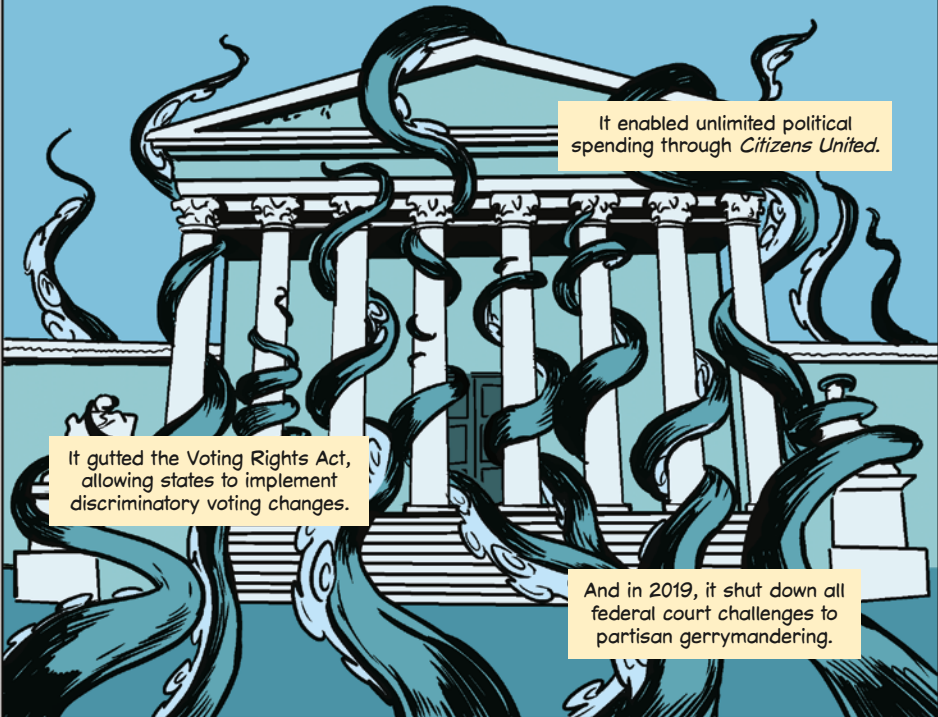
Paul Weyrich, co-founder, Heritage Foundation

The Supreme Court, its membership heavily influenced by the wealth hoarders, has followed their anti-democracy agenda.

It enabled unlimited political spending through *Citizens United*.

It gutted the Voting Rights Act, allowing states to implement discriminatory voting changes.

And in 2019, it shut down all federal court challenges to partisan gerrymandering.



## LOCKING DOWN THE CONSTITUTION

The wealth hoarders' ultimate goal: changing the U.S. Constitution to shackle American democracy so that it benefits the very wealthy and is forever unresponsive to the peoples' will.

Their proposed constitutional changes include:

- Requiring a balanced budget.

Passage of this amendment would force immediate, radical cuts to government spending, with Social Security benefits among the many casualties.

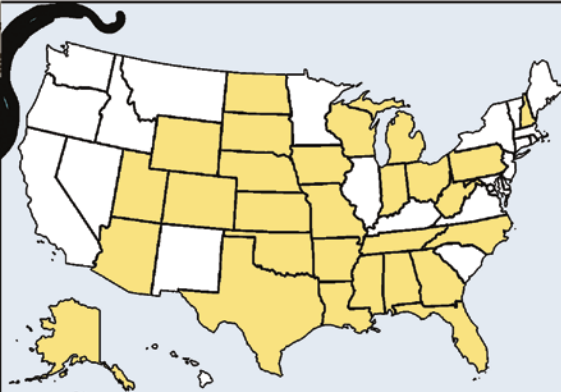
- Slashing income taxes and eliminating estate taxes.

- State legislators, not the people, electing U.S. senators.

The U.S. Constitution allows for a convention to propose changes to it, without going through Congress, if two-thirds of states (that's thirty-four states) agree.

### Article V.

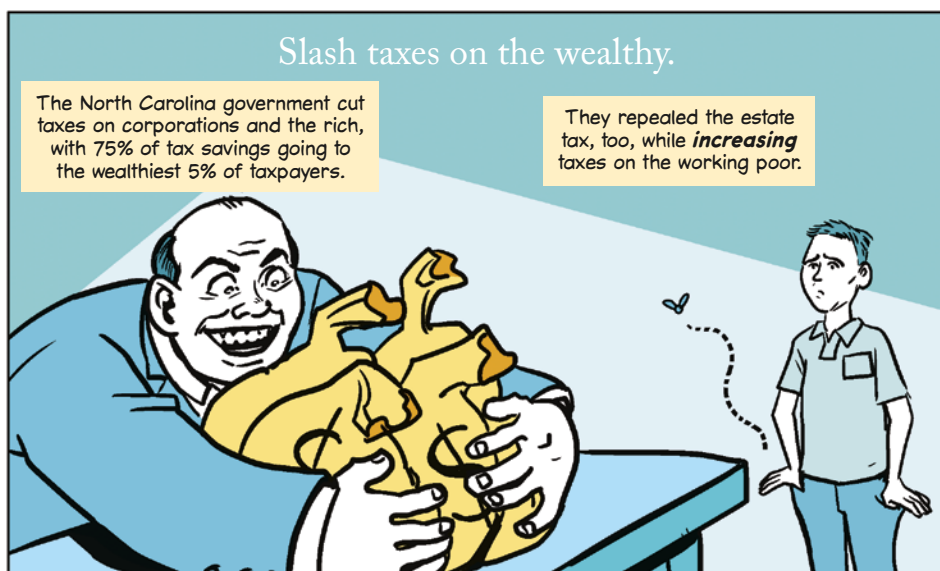
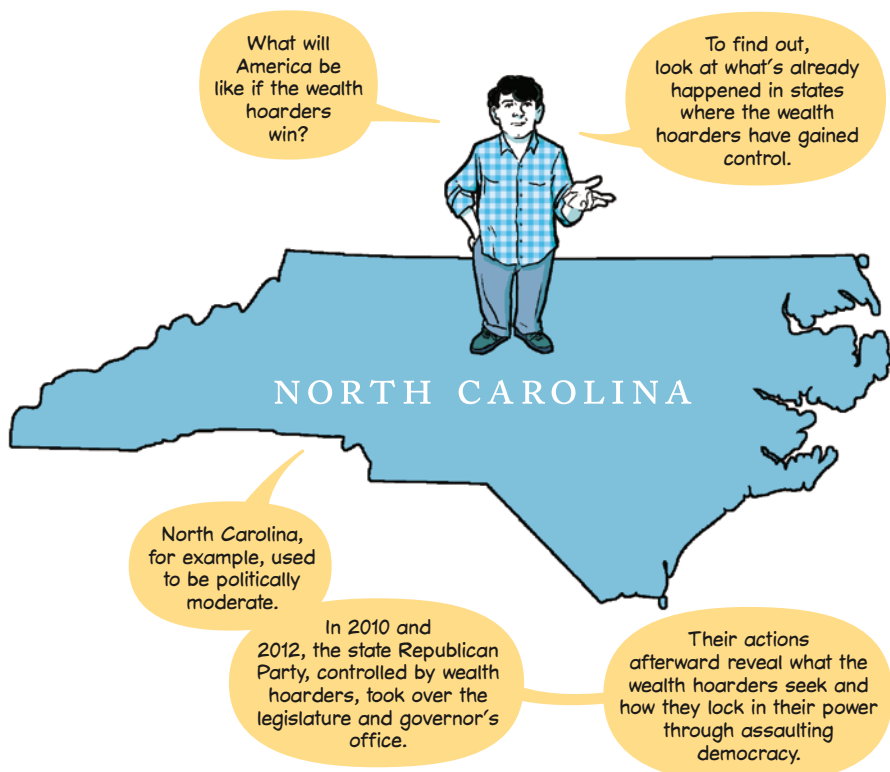
two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments, or several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by the Congress: Provided that no Amendment which



Lest you think this plan is just a fantasy, twenty-eight states have already passed resolutions for a convention, and the amendments above come from a 2013 book that was a number-one bestseller.

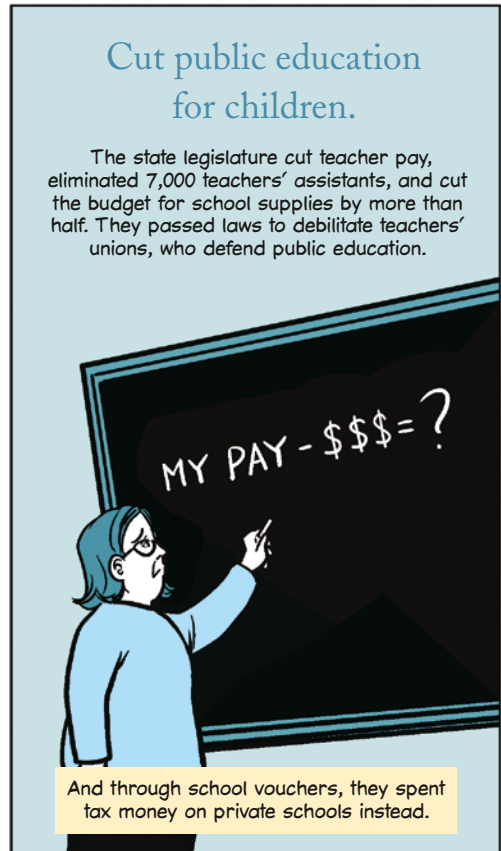
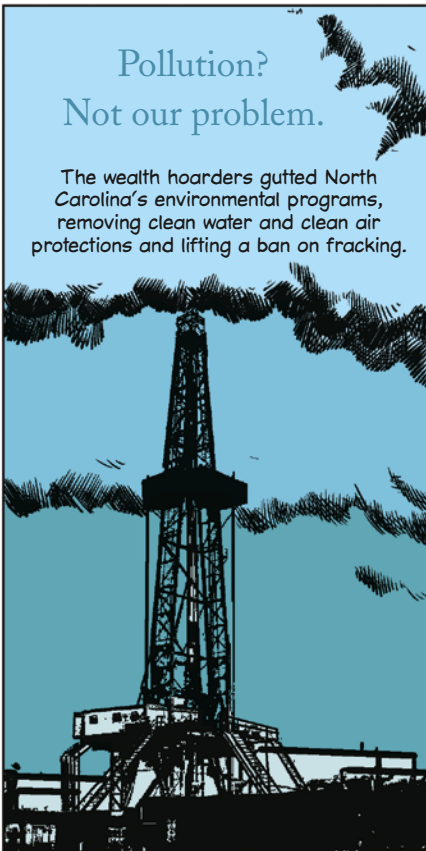
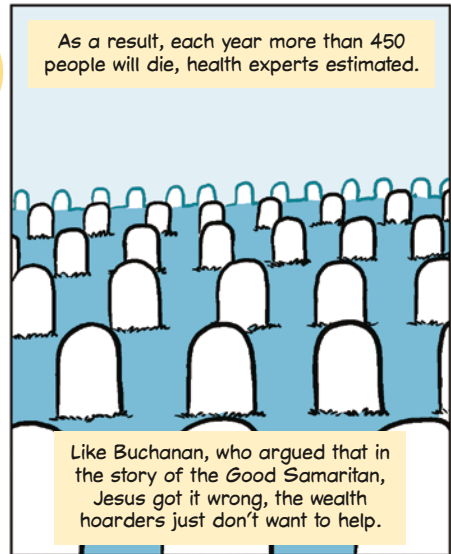
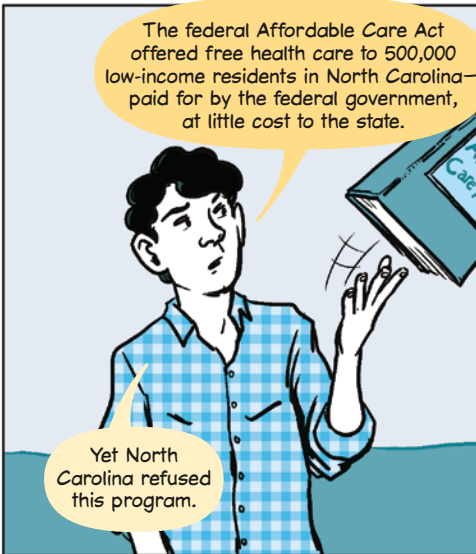


## *the wealth hoarders' endgame*





If you're sick and can't pay  
for medical treatment, tough luck.





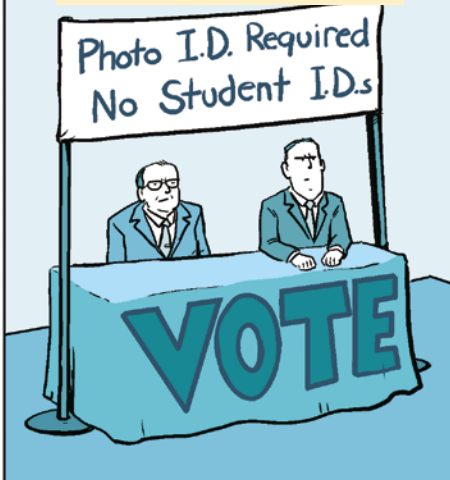
Unlimited spending to influence elections.

Republicans eliminated public funding of judicial elections ("clean elections"), then spent millions of dollars to elect their own favored judges.



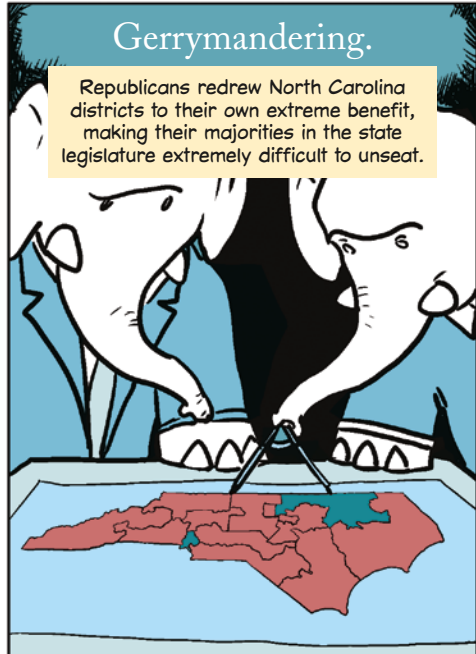
### Voter suppression.

The Republican legislature made it harder to vote in ways that disproportionately affected African Americans and young people.



### Gerrymandering.

Republicans redrew North Carolina districts to their own extreme benefit, making their majorities in the state legislature extremely difficult to unseat.



This is the wealth hoarder strategy: rigging the rules so that the interests of a handful of billionaires reign, regardless of what most people want and how most people vote.



## POISONED WATER

The residents of Flint, Michigan, know what a world without democracy tastes like: poisoned water.



A Koch-funded center in Michigan successfully pushed for a state law that allows the governor to take over local government in communities facing a "financial emergency."



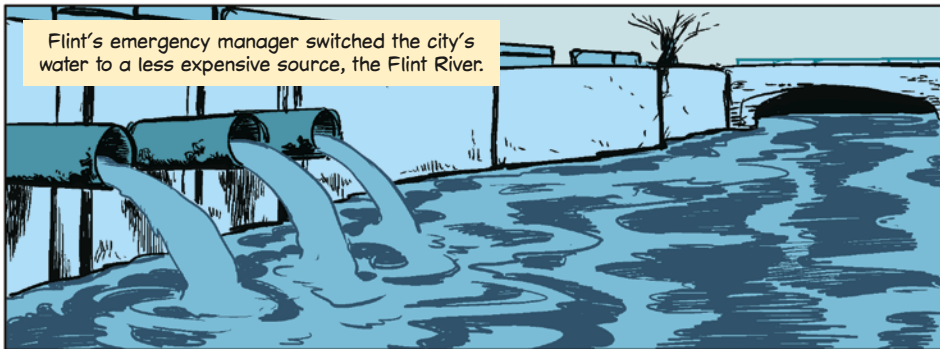
Emergency managers, appointed by the governor, can nullify union contracts, sell off local resources to private companies, and impose other measures at will, regardless of the opinions of elected leaders and people in the community.



Dennis Knowles, City Commissioner,  
Benton Harbor, Michigan

It's part of the wealth hoarder strategy of reducing government services and government spending, despite what the majority wants.

Flint's emergency manager switched the city's water to a less expensive source, the Flint River.



The river water was so toxic it corroded pipes, exposing all of Flint's residents, 100,000 people, to lead and other chemicals.



Lead causes permanent brain damage in children.

In the wealth hoarders' world, you can have anything you want if you can afford to pay for it.



The toxic water corroded car parts at the General Motors plant in Flint, but GM's executives and lobbyists had made campaign contributions to Michigan's governor.

The GM plant got its water supply switched back to the original, clean water source, as Flint's citizens, who are mostly African American and low-income, still drank the same water that corroded car parts.



An influential wealth hoarder economist summed up their vision:

Worthy individuals will in fact rise from poverty on a regular basis, and that will make it easier to ignore those who are left behind.



Tyler Cowen

## secrecy and coercion

Some libertarians are principled and open about what they seek.

I strongly disagree with their goals, but I can respect people who are making honest arguments.

The wealth hoarders are different.



They are secretive about their funding.

They are secretive about their tactics.

They are secretive about their goals and endgame.

And they are willing to lie to get what they want.



They promote lies about global warming, Social Security, balanced budgets, voter fraud, and more.

SOCIAL SECURITY IS MELTING THE GLACIERS.

IT'S TRUE.



And they use unlimited dark money to flood our politics with lying attack ads.

Chris Heagarty voted to raise taxes over a billion dollars.

But I haven't even served in the legislature yet!





Because their radical anti-government vision is widely and deeply unpopular, they seek to keep their **true aims** secret.



Remember, the wealth hoarders' bold Libertarian presidential platform in 1980 received only 1% of the vote.

But if wealth hoarders keep their aims hidden, and lie about them, they have a better chance of success.



So as we've seen, the wealth hoarders have pursued their aims incrementally, taking government apart piece by piece.



They make justifications for each action separately, in any way they can, without stating the full scope of their radical aims.



The wealth hoarders  
seek to keep their  
**funding** secret, too.

Their hundreds of seemingly unrelated groups and  
dark money political campaigns would be a lot less  
effective if people knew that the funds for all of it came  
from the same small group of extremely rich people.

Using secrecy  
and deception to get  
people to do what they  
wouldn't do otherwise  
is coercion.

The wealth hoarders  
claim to promote freedom,  
but their tactics reveal that  
they want freedom only  
for the wealthy.

The rest of us  
can't be trusted to  
make our own, fully  
informed decisions—  
we must be  
deceived.



## image makeover

In 2012, the Kochs set out to improve their image.

Said their strategist about middle-of-the-road Americans:

Big business they see as very suspicious... We've got to convince these people we mean well and that we're good people.



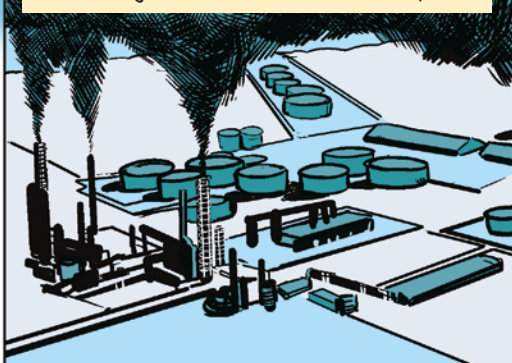
The Kochs joined an alliance with progressive groups for criminal justice reform.

Meanwhile, they continued to champion candidates opposed to reform.



**VITTER FOR SENATE**

The Kochs began working on criminal justice issues after their company faced charges for dumping benzene, a carcinogen, into the air, and making false statements to cover it up.



They have promoted legal changes that would make it harder to win conviction of corporate executives for crimes like these.



The Kochs have emphasized their funding of the United Negro College Fund.

**UNCF**

A mind is a terrible thing to waste

Much of these funds support African American students studying a favorite Koch subject:

HOW ENTREPRENEURSHIP,  
ECONOMICS, AND INNOVATION  
CONTRIBUTE TO WELL-BEING

And the Koch network came up with a new name and slogan.

Back in 1958, the wealth hoarder economist Buchanan wrote privately that his university center needed a bland name, to avoid drawing attention to its members' extreme views.

~~THE J.M. BUCHANAN CENTER FOR THE  
DISSOLUTION OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT~~  
THE THOMAS JEFFERSON CENTER FOR  
STUDIES IN POLITICAL ECONOMY

In 2019, the Koch network followed suit, adopting a new name, "Stand Together," and a new slogan, "Greater your good."



Will the wealth hoarders change anything except their slogan?

Don't hold your breath.



## how to fight back

The wealth hoarders give the most attention to the **rules** rather than the **rulers**.

To counter them and create the kind of country we want, we must do the same.

The approaches I outline in other chapters, like supporting clean elections, expanding voting, stopping gerrymandering, and passing transparency laws are the key places to focus.



You can also help by spreading the word, and shining a light, to combat secrecy.



When people know the specific goals the wealth hoarders seek, like the elimination of public schools and Social Security, they recoil.

You can help by spreading the word about what's happening in North Carolina, for example.





The wealth hoarders also depend on the dark money they spend to secretly influence elections.



Passing laws in your state and city for transparency of political spending is an effective way to counter wealth hoarder aims.



It's time for transparency about large donations to nonprofit groups, too, even if they aren't engaged in elections.

Transparency laws would shine a light on the funding of hundreds of think tanks and other organizations promoting wealth hoarder goals.

It would allow the public to see more clearly how a relative handful of billionaires is distorting America.



## FOCUS ON YOUR STATE

The wealth hoarders have the most control at the state government level, compared to the local and federal levels.

This is partly because most people pay attention to what is happening nationally, and what is happening in their own city or town, more than they pay attention to what is happening in state government.



To be most effective in unrigging democracy, focus at the state level. State government has a lot of power. Working with others, your efforts can make a big difference.



See the final chapter of this book and [UnrigBook.com](http://UnrigBook.com) for specific ways you can help.

The wealth hoarders' strength in the states has been aided by the economic decline of local newspapers, as fewer journalism watchdogs are around to tell the public what's really going on in state government.

Supporting state investigative journalism organizations is another way you can contribute.



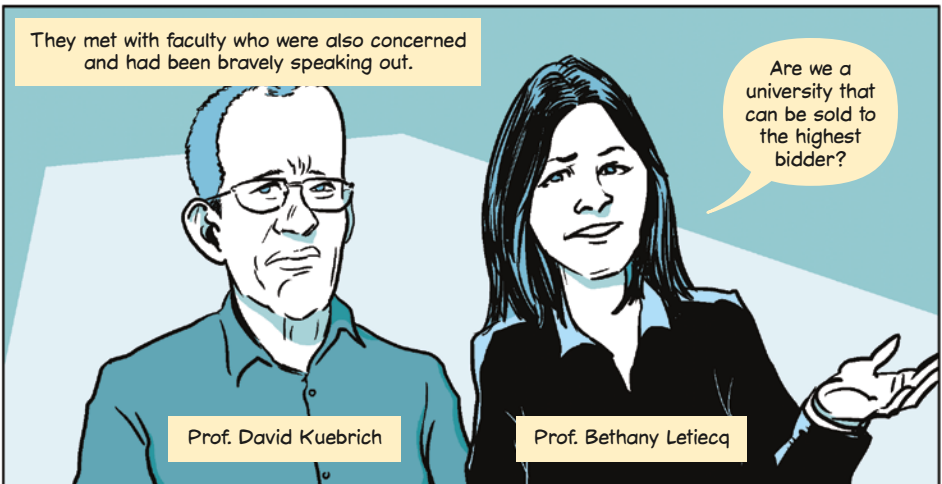
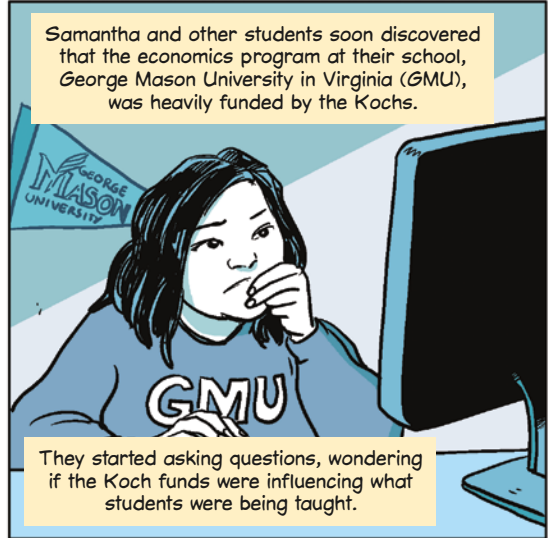
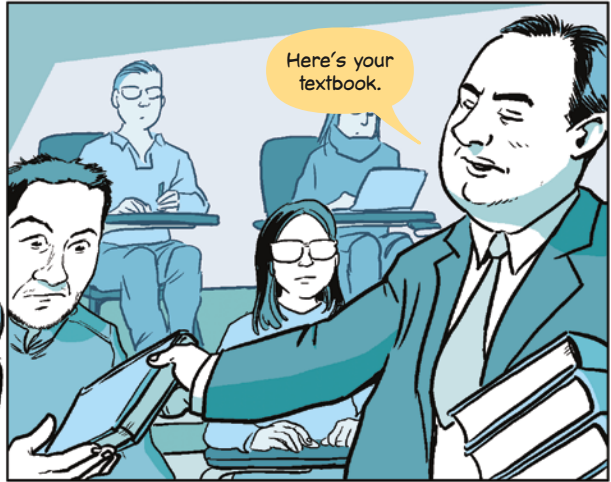
## UNKOCH MY CAMPUS

For every paid wealth hoarder minion, there's someone out there standing up to them.

Like Samantha Parsons.



As an eighteen-year-old college freshman in 2012, Samantha heard an odd story about the professor in a friend's economics class.



The faculty and students pressed the school administration for copies of gift agreements from big donors, but were stonewalled.



The students found volunteer legal help and sued the university under freedom of information laws.

The university was forced to release gift agreements that were previously hidden, generating national headlines.

# The New York Times

## What Charles Koch and Other Donors to George Mason University Got for Their Money

The gift agreements revealed the ugly truth: The Kochs had helped choose faculty members and biased what was taught for decades.



The point of the university is to serve students. I trusted GMU to look out for our education. I feel betrayed.

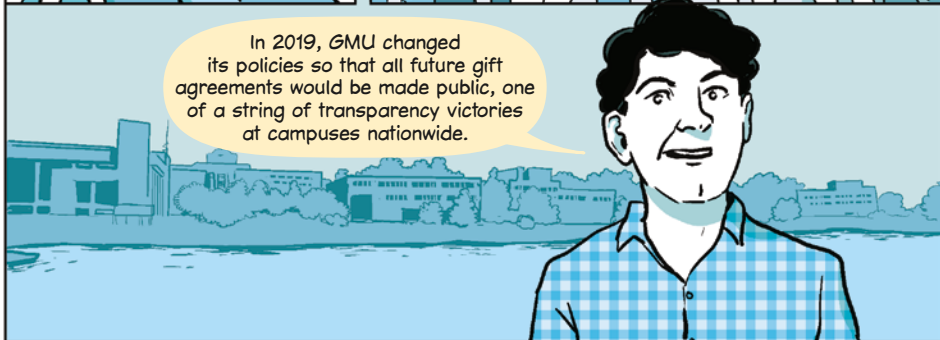


Student leader  
Janine Gaspari

While advocating for transparency at GMU, Samantha helped start UnKoch My Campus, a group supporting activists in exposing and ending Koch influence nationwide.



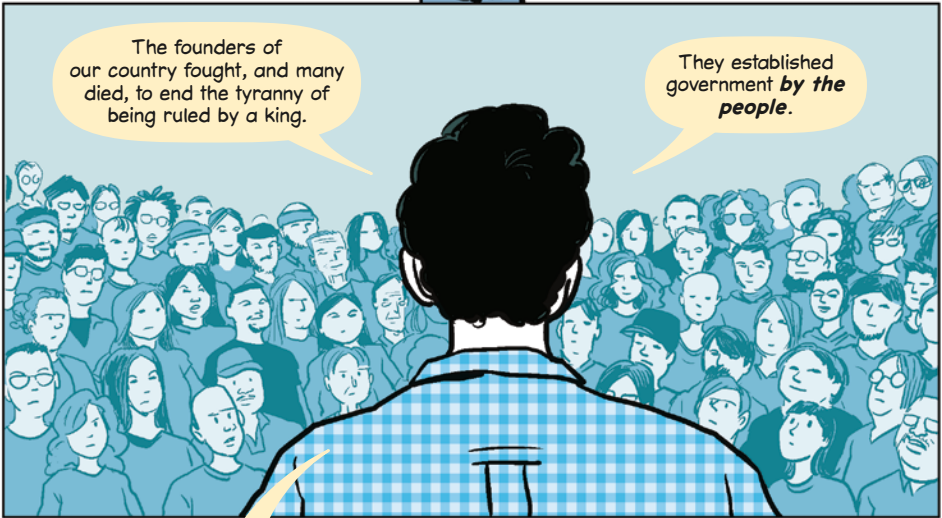
In 2019, GMU changed its policies so that all future gift agreements would be made public, one of a string of transparency victories at campuses nationwide.



## UNRIG THE RULES



We must make defending and expanding democracy our top priority.



The founders of our country fought, and many died, to end the tyranny of being ruled by a king.

They established government *by the people*.



We benefit today from the many Americans who have stood up, fought back, and sacrificed to protect and expand our democracy.



So that we could take for granted having government by the people.



So that we could have a better life.

But we can't take it for granted anymore.



